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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1514 (2003) of 13 November 2003

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 1514 (2003) of 13 November 2003, the Security Council requested me to report by 10 January 2004 on the efforts of the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI) to facilitate peace and stability in the country, including how those efforts might be improved and, in particular, the possible reinforcement of the United Nations presence in Côte d'Ivoire.

2. In this connection, it should be recalled that the President of Côte d'Ivoire, Laurent Gbagbo, in a letter to the President of the Security Council dated 12 November 2003 (S/2003/1081, annex), proposed the strengthening of the Mission's mandate and the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force. In addition, on 24 November, the Security Council received a ministerial delegation from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) led by the Foreign Minister of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo, who conveyed an appeal from the subregional organization to the Security Council to consider strengthening the ECOWAS Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (ECOMICI) and transforming it into a United Nations peacekeeping force. At the same meeting, I informed the Security Council of my intention to dispatch an assessment mission to Côte d'Ivoire to collect the necessary information on the ground.

3. The assessment mission, which was headed by Hédi Annabi, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, visited Côte d'Ivoire from 3 to 11 December 2003. Representatives of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Department of Public Information, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) participated in the mission. Meetings were held with President Gbagbo, the Prime Minister, Seydou Diarra, key members of the Government of National Reconciliation, the leadership of the Forces nouvelles, the political parties, representatives of civil society, members of the diplomatic community, ECOMICI, the French forces (Licorne) and MINUCI, as well as members of the United Nations country team and several other stakeholders. The Assistant Secretary-General also travelled to Accra on 9 December to meet with

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the Chairman of ECOWAS and President of Ghana, John Agyekum Kufuor, and met separately on 12 December with senior officials of the French Government and the leader of the Rassemblement des républicains, Alassane Ouattara, in Paris.

4. Members of the assessment mission also undertook field visits, including to some of the deployment positions of Licorne at Bangolo, Bouaké, Yamoussoukro and Man and to the sector headquarters of ECOMICI at Bondoukou, Daloa, Priko, Tiebissou and Zuénoula to assess the operational capabilities of its contingents. Some members of the mission also visited Gagnoa, some 200 kilometres north-west of Abidjan, to assess the situation regarding protection issues.

II. Findings of the mission

5. The assessment mission sought the views of its various interlocutors regarding the situation on the ground, including prospects for a viable peace process, as well as the roles of MINUCI, ECOMICI and Licorne in facilitating the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement (see S/2003/99, annex I), and how the role of the United Nations in supporting the peace process could be reinforced. The findings of the mission are set out below.

A. Status of the peace process

6. Progress in the Ivorian peace process over the past 12 months has been mixed. For the first three months after the signing of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, in January 2003, obstacles were encountered in the implementation of the Agreement, which delayed the formation of the Government of National Reconciliation. In particular, leaders of some signatories to the Agreement, along with the leadership of the Ivorian defence forces, rejected the allocation of the defence and internal security portfolios to the Forces nouvelles. The newly appointed Prime Minister was unable immediately to take up his post in Abidjan because of a series of violent demonstrations in the capital over this issue.

7. Although Prime Minister Diarra was eventually installed at Yamoussoukro on 10 February, he continued to encounter difficulties in his efforts to form a Government of National Reconciliation. The Forces nouvelles insisted on taking up the two contentious portfolios. In this connection, on two occasions, the Prime Minister presented a provisional cabinet list, but the President drew up a different list. Furthermore, the President was initially reluctant to delegate the necessary executive authority to the Prime Minister, as foreseen under the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement.

8. The impasse over the appointments to the Ministries of Defence and Internal Security was resolved at a meeting of the Ivorian parties convened in Accra from 6 to 8 March 2003 by the current Chairman of ECOWAS, President Kufuor of Ghana, at which the parties agreed to create a National Security Council to oversee the two ministries while the Prime Minister continued to seek consensus on candidates for the portfolios. Furthermore, on 10 March, President Gbagbo issued a decree delegating executive authority to the Prime Minister to implement the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, but only for a six-month period. Despite that breakthrough, the Forces nouvelles, citing security concerns, boycotted the three meetings of the

Council of Ministers that were subsequently convened by the Prime Minister. It was not until 16 April that the Forces nouvelles eventually took up their posts and the new Government started functioning.

9. During the period from April to early August, the new Government made encouraging progress towards implementing the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, including the elaboration of a draft programme for the implementation of the Agreement, the development of a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and the establishment of a National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration and a National Reunification Committee, as well as the adoption of an amnesty law. In addition, the Government took steps to address some regional dimensions of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire by repairing relations and restoring trade links with neighbouring Burkina Faso and Mali, which had been disrupted during the conflict.

10. On the military front, the Forces armées nationales de Côte d'Ivoire (FANCI) and the Forces nouvelles also took steps to consolidate the ceasefire, build confidence between the two forces and prepare the ground for the cantonment of forces and the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. Those measures included the declaration by the two forces on 4 July 2003 of the end of the war, the reopening of roads and railway lines linking the Government-held south and the northern provinces controlled by the Forces nouvelles, the release of some prisoners of war, the extension of the ceasefire line to the western part of the country and the creation of a "zone of confidence", where the Government took initial steps to restore State authority and some public services.

11. However, as indicated in my report of 4 November 2003 (S/2003/1069), in early August the serious difficulties that had plagued the peace process earlier started to resurface. The Forces nouvelles objected, in particular, to the procedure followed by President Gbagbo in appointing the Ministers for Defence and Internal Security. They also reiterated their continuing concerns about the security of those among them who had become members of the Government, as well as about the non-delegation of sufficient executive authority to the Prime Minister. In addition, there were concerns about activities of militia and youth groups, as well as the propagation of provocative and inflammatory statements by various parties and the continued de facto partitioning of the country. These difficulties culminated in the decision on 23 September 2003 by the Forces nouvelles to suspend their participation in the Government of National Reconciliation.

12. The political stalemate resulted in a deterioration of the security situation when, on 30 November, a group of "young patriots" supported by some 100 troops from FANCI attempted to forcibly cross the ceasefire line in the area of Mbahiakro, with the aim of launching an attack against the Forces nouvelles. The group was stopped by the Licorne forces, and a FANCI armoured personnel carrier was destroyed during the ensuing exchange of gunfire. This incident constituted a grave violation of the ceasefire agreement.

13. Shortly thereafter, a group of FANCI soldiers forced their way into the Ivorian national television station studios in Abidjan and broadcast a statement demanding the withdrawal of the Licorne forces from the zone of confidence to allow the Government forces to fight the Forces nouvelles and "reunite" the country. The group reaffirmed their loyalty to President Gbagbo but demanded the resignation of the army chief of staff and other senior military officers. Furthermore, in early

December groups of "young patriots" armed with machetes and knives staged violent demonstrations at the Licorne base in Abidjan. Earlier, in November, several ethnic clashes had been reported in the zone of confidence near the town of Duékoué, resulting in the deaths of an unconfirmed number of civilians.

14. At the time that the assessment mission arrived in Côte d'Ivoire, the Ivorian leaders were preoccupied with efforts to defuse those tensions and find a way out of the political stalemate. The mission made it clear to all the Ivorian parties that the United Nations would be able to help them restore peace and stability in their country only if they engaged in a viable peace process that the Organization could support. In particular, the assessment mission emphasized that the Forces nouvelles must return to the Government of National Reconciliation, the Government must take steps to approve the reform package foreseen under the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, and the cantonment of forces, as well as the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, must begin.

15. In this connection, the Forces nouvelles presented to the mission a list of issues to be addressed to facilitate their return to the Government. These included measures regarding the security of their cabinet ministers, delegation of the necessary executive authority to the Prime Minister in line with the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement and their objection to the process followed by President Gbagbo in appointing the Ministers for Defence and Internal Security. The Assistant Secretary-General raised these matters with the President and the Prime Minister. For his part, President Gbagbo pledged that the security concerns of the Forces nouvelles would be addressed and that "no harm would come to them".

16. Earlier, the President and the Prime Minister had initiated a series of meetings that yielded important decisions aimed at stabilizing the security situation and reinvigorating the stalled peace process. On 4 December, President Gbagbo chaired a high-level meeting of senior military officers of the FANCI and Forces nouvelles, with the participation of representatives from Licorne and ECOMICI, as well as MINUCI. At that meeting, the two sides agreed to resume preparations for the cantonment of their forces as well as the quartering of heavy weapons in designated areas and the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. They also reaffirmed their commitment to preserving the unity of Côte d'Ivoire. A follow-up meeting was held in Bouaké on 10 December at which FANCI and the Forces nouvelles decided to begin dismantling their checkpoints and withdrawing heavy weapons from the zone of confidence to specific quartering locations. In addition, they reaffirmed their decision to implement the cantonment of their respective troops at 17 previously identified sites.

17. As a result of these decisions, the situation has improved. The withdrawal of heavy weapons from the zone of confidence began on 13 December, and a joint ECOMICI/MINUCI team conducted a verification of the completion of the process between 26 and 29 December. The dismantling of checkpoints is also under way. In addition, on 7 December the Forces nouvelles released 40 FANCI and police personnel who had been held as prisoners of war.

18. Complementary efforts have also been initiated on the political track. On 5 December, the Prime Minister visited Bouaké for consultations to convince the Forces nouvelles to return to the Government of National Reconciliation. However, it was subsequently reported that a shooting incident at the Ivorian national television station, which took place on 11 December between FANCI troops,

gendarmes and a militia group calling itself "the Ninjas", had aggravated concerns regarding the safety of the Forces nouvelles cabinet ministers and prompted a decision by the Forces nouvelles to delay their return to the Government.

19. In addition, there appeared to be divisions within the Forces nouvelles over this matter. It was reported that on 19 December a group of Forces nouvelles combatants had forced their way into the radio station at Bouaké and announced that Sergeant Ibrahim Coulibaly, an influential military leader of the Forces nouvelles, should be included in the decision-making regarding the peace process and, in particular, the return of the Forces nouvelles ministers to the Government. Nonetheless, on 23 December a spokesman of the Forces nouvelles announced that the group had decided to end its suspension of participation in the Government.

20. In further encouraging developments, on 12 December the President sent a letter to the Prime Minister in which he confirmed that the executive authority delegated to him allowed him to implement the provisions of "the Paris programme" until the elections, to be held in 2005. Additionally, President Gbagbo met with FANCI and Forces nouvelles officers in Abidjan on 16 December and discussed arrangements for a proposed visit to Bouaké, his first since the outbreak of the conflict in September 2002. At meetings held on 18 and 22 December, the Council of Ministers also began consideration of draft legislation on land tenure, nationality and criteria for eligibility for the presidency.

B. Regional aspects

21. The leadership of Côte d'Ivoire is intensifying its efforts to engage neighbouring States with a view to addressing the regional dimensions of the crisis in the country. In this connection, the political stalemate in Côte d'Ivoire was the focus of discussions during President Gbagbo's meetings with Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso, in Bobo-Dioulasso on 26 November and Amadou Toumani Touré, President of Mali, in Bamako on 28 November.

22. The Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, Charles Gyude Bryant, also held consultations with President Gbagbo in Abidjan on 24 November on the peace processes in the two countries. With the deployment of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the beginning of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process there, it is expected that an improvement in the security situation in Liberia will have a positive impact on the efforts to stabilize Côte d'Ivoire. In particular, the repatriation of both Liberian refugees and Liberian armed elements should help to improve stability in the western part of the country. However, concerns have been raised at reports of rebel elements in Liberia moving arms across the border into Côte d'Ivoire and other neighbouring countries to avoid giving them up in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. Addressing this issue will require close coordination between UNMIL and MINUCI.

23. As indicated in my previous reports, there are a number of other interrelated cross-border problems underlying the conflict and instability in Côte d'Ivoire and the Mano River Union countries, including the use of child soldiers, the use and proliferation of mercenaries, flows of refugees and the culture of impunity. A further problem is the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the many fighters from several West African countries who have been involved in conflicts in Côte

d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone. A regional approach is needed to address each of these issues, involving close cooperation between United Nations peace operations in the subregion, together with concerned United Nations agencies and international partners. As I indicated in my report on the recommendations of the Security Council mission to West Africa of 5 December 2003 (S/2003/1147), the United Nations Office in West Africa is preparing a report on some of these problems in the subregion containing practical recommendations for addressing them. In this regard, as part of an ongoing consultative process, MINUCI, the United Nations Office in West Africa, the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Guinea-Bissau, UNMIL and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone met on 14 November in Freetown to discuss cross-border issues and mechanisms for enhancing cooperation among the operations.

C. Electoral process

24. The Linas-Marcoussis Agreement sets the conduct of credible and transparent elections as one of the principal tasks of the Government of National Reconciliation. In addition, the Agreement establishes some fundamental steps to be taken in preparation for the 2005 elections. These include, notably, the passage of legislation on citizenship, reform of electoral legislation, in particular to ensure a more inclusive composition of the Electoral Commission, establishing an oversight commission and overhauling the mechanism for issuing national identity documents, as well as measures to guarantee the independence of the judiciary in regard to the resolution of election claims and complaints.

25. Only recently has the Government taken steps to fulfil some of the more salient of these requirements, and the finalization of those steps still depends on legislative assent. The early and transparent fulfilment of these requirements is essential to the conduct of the elections and will be central to perceptions about the credibility of the entire electoral process. It is of particular concern that the National Identification Office continues to operate without the judicial-political oversight mechanism provided for in the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. This opens up the possibility that the identification process, which will form the basis for the register of voters, will remain a subject of controversy, thereby tainting the electoral process. Also, some related government decisions have been viewed very unfavourably by some sectors of Ivorian society. One such example was the appointment in August of six individuals considered to be sympathetic to President Gbagbo to the eight-member Constitutional Council, which is constitutionally tasked with resolving electoral disputes and declaring the final results of the elections.

26. At meetings with the assessment mission, President Gbagbo, Prime Minister Diarra and all other interlocutors called for a strong United Nations involvement in the preparation of the 2005 elections. Some interlocutors indicated that the elections would be credible only if the United Nations were entirely responsible for all aspects of their organization and conduct. While it is understood that some degree of United Nations involvement may indeed be the key to acceptance by all sides of the validity of the process, the credibility of the legal framework for the elections as well as the scope and resource requirements of such involvement would need to be further evaluated through a needs-assessment mission. As indicated in my report of 4 November 2003 (S/2003/1069, para. 41), an electoral assessment mission that was scheduled to visit Côte d'Ivoire in September in response to the Prime Minister's

letter to the Secretary-General of 27 August 2003 requesting electoral assistance from the United Nations had to be postponed because of the deteriorating political and security situation in the country at that time.

27. In addition to the preliminary tasks outlined in the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, several other conditions need to be met in order for preparations for the 2005 elections to start in earnest. The continuing situation of insecurity, the effective partitioning of the country and the consequent breakdown of administrative structures in some areas, as well as the lack of progress in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, constitute obstacles to electoral preparations and will need to be addressed as a matter of priority. Another obstacle is the absence of a consensus on the content and modalities for adoption of some of the reforms essential for the elections. In addition, the issue of the low level of public trust in the institutions involved in preparing the electoral process, including the National Identification Office, the Independent Electoral Commission and the Constitutional Council, will need to be addressed. With regard to the first two institutions, compliance with the appropriate provisions of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement would do much to boost the confidence of political parties and other stakeholders.

28. Given the current situation, proposals by President Gbagbo to submit some key issues, namely, nationality and land tenure laws and the amendment to article 35 of the Constitution, to a referendum in advance of the elections may prove to be problematic, given the limited time frame for electoral preparations, and may have a serious impact on the prospects for holding the elections in October 2005. In this regard, it should be noted that only the amendment of article 35 is constitutionally mandated to be submitted to a referendum.

D. Human rights situation

29. The human rights unit of MINUCI reported to the assessment mission that serious and widespread human rights violations continued to be perpetrated against civilians, including harassment, killings, arbitrary arrests, torture, the detention of persons incommunicado, roadblocks, house searches, theft and extortion. There are also reports of continuing use of child soldiers and of frequent cases of sexual abuse against women, including sexual slavery and rape, committed by elements from both Government forces and the Forces nouvelles.

30. Neither the Forces nouvelles nor the Government have taken effective steps to bring perpetrators of human rights violations to justice. Furthermore, little has been done by the Government to check the abuses by urban militias or youth groups, such as the Young Patriots, who have been responsible for attacks against and harassment of civilians, including attacks against media representatives perceived to be supportive of the political opposition. Media campaigns against so-called foreigners accused of being allied to the Forces nouvelles and opposition political parties have continued, often on the basis of ethnicity, religion or region of origin, and fuel ethnic tensions, violence and harassment of specific communities and ethnic groups. Against this background, in late November a number of violent incidents were reported at Gagnoa and surrounding villages among the indigenous population and other residents, many of whom had been living in the area for generations. The

incidents resulted in hundreds being forcibly displaced, several deaths and the looting and burning of houses.

31. At the institutional level, judicial structures are not functioning in the territory controlled by the Forces nouvelles and are not fully functional in other parts of the country. However, the Ministry for Human Rights has submitted to the Council of Ministers the legal text on the establishment of the National Commission on Human Rights, which was recently approved, as envisaged in the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement.

32. The assessment mission met with members of a wide range of local human rights groups who reported that they were often subjected to harassment and persecution in their efforts to publicly report on violations and to raise awareness about the human rights situation. The mission noted a general call for an end to the current climate of impunity, which was seen as an important factor behind the ongoing cycle of violence and human rights violations. Some of the mission's interlocutors also called for the urgent establishment of an international commission of enquiry, provided for under the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, to investigate and report on serious human rights violations that have occurred since the outbreak of the conflict on 19 September 2002. The need to strengthen the human rights mandate of MINUCI and its capacity to monitor the human rights situation was also stressed.

E. Media

33. The inflammatory tone of reporting by some media outlets in Abidjan has moderated somewhat, although there are continuous fluctuations as political tensions rise and fall. MINUCI itself was the target of a campaign of negative reporting in October and November 2003, and a number of media outlets retain a strong negative undercurrent, which is reflected in sensational headlines. Furthermore, the Young Patriots on more than one occasion have destroyed retailers' stocks of newspapers judged to be too close to the Forces nouvelles. At the same time, journalists' associations have undertaken initiatives designed to promote peace and national reconciliation, such as the national press week for reconciliation and peace, organized in November by the Union nationale des journalistes de Côte d'Ivoire. The Public Information Unit of MINUCI has actively supported these initiatives. Many journalists remain hopeful that there will soon be progress towards the adoption of a new press law.

34. The MINUCI Public Information Unit continues to monitor the Abidjan press and to provide the media with accurate and timely information on the work of the Mission and its support for the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. In addition to press releases and other forms of outreach, the Unit launched a monthly newsletter entitled "MINUCI Info" in early December 2003. The newsletter was distributed in Abidjan and to those areas of the country where MINUCI maintains a presence. Despite these efforts, the work of the Unit has been hampered by a number of factors, including its very small size, its limited operating budget and the division of the country, as well as the close identification of many media outlets with one or another of the parties and a fractured information infrastructure outside the capital. These factors have resulted in a serious information deficit, especially outside Abidjan and in particular in the northern half of the country.

F. Humanitarian situation

35. Notwithstanding the progress that has been made in recent months in terms of humanitarian access, the political stalemate has aggravated some aspects of the humanitarian situation. Issues of protection, health and education are currently the key concerns of the humanitarian community in Côte d'Ivoire. The protection needs of those caught in inter-ethnic conflicts or in clashes between national and foreign communities, as well as those of returning populations, have largely not been addressed and require urgent attention.

36. There are an estimated 500,000 internally displaced persons, 69,000 refugees and thousands of affected host communities in the country. Short-term food insecurity is of concern in the north due to the effective partitioning of the country, and there has been a substantial loss of income in the west due to the impact of the conflict, including the forced departure of many agricultural workers.

37. The public health system, including the provision of safe water and sanitation, has been severely disrupted. Eighty per cent of health facilities that existed before the outbreak of the conflict in September 2002 in the north and west of the country have closed or operate at best with minimal facilities. Health facilities in the south are overstretched due to the influx of internally displaced persons in need of medical attention. The outbreak of measles and cholera poses serious health problems. The provision of preventive and reproductive health care has also been negatively affected by the crisis.

38. Despite pressure from international partners, the Government was slow in validating school-year initiatives taken by local authorities and communities in the north and west during 2003. Private institutions, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations have also undertaken informal educational initiatives. An estimated 1.6 million children do not have access to formal primary education countrywide, some 532,000 of whom are in areas controlled by the Forces nouvelles.

39. Côte d'Ivoire is the country in West Africa that is most severely affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The prevalence rate is currently estimated at 10.5 per cent, compared to an average of 5 to 8 per cent in the subregion, with peaks of 15 per cent in some areas affected by the conflict. The increase of HIV/AIDS due to continued sexual abuse and violence is particularly disturbing and requires an immediate, focused intervention to combat its spread within both the country and the subregion.

40. In spite of the highly volatile political environment, the parties to the conflict have recognized the principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence that govern the activities of the humanitarian and development actors, and access has generally been granted throughout the country. MINUCI and the United Nations country team currently share a common understanding and analysis regarding the oversight of United Nations activities but do not operate jointly in the field. These arrangements should remain until the current political situation improves.

41. The Côte d'Ivoire 2004 consolidated appeal was launched in November 2003 for $60 million. The timely mobilization of resources for the implementation of humanitarian programmes is essential, and I would like to encourage donors to respond generously to the 2004 appeal. In this regard, my Humanitarian Envoy for the Crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, Carolyn McAskie, who visited the country from 6 to 10

December, observed that one of the key obstacles to providing effective assistance was the continuing lack of understanding that the country was experiencing a serious humanitarian crisis. In particular, the donor community has not yet shifted from a classical development funding mindset, with its associated investment conditions, to the provision of unqualified funding of humanitarian and recovery activities. Most donors make the release of dormant funds subject to the resumption of the peace agreement. It is important for donors to understand that delaying the funding of humanitarian activities will result in a much higher cost of recovery when peace returns, as the case of Liberia has shown.

G. Impact of the conflict on the economy

42. As indicated in my previous report (ibid., sect. V), the economic growth that Côte d'Ivoire had enjoyed in the first half of 2002 was completely reversed by the eruption of the conflict in September 2002. The country's gross domestic product (GDP) dropped by approximately 2.7 per cent in 2003, according to recent estimates. The slump in economic activity cuts across all sectors, with the noticeable exception of the cocoa, oil and gas subsectors. For the first nine months of 2003, compared to the same period in 2002, the production of cash crops fell by 40 per cent for coffee, 13 per cent for palm oil and 6.8 per cent for pineapples. For cotton, rubber and food crops, the data are not readily available, but the continued displacement of more than half a million people, including thousands of immigrant farmers, and the delays in and obstacles to the provision of agricultural inputs in the north are indications that a significant decline in the production of those commodities can be expected. On the other hand, cocoa production increased by 13.85 per cent, oil production by 43 per cent and gas production by 1.3 per cent. However, gold extraction declined by 62 per cent due to the closure of the main goldmine.

43. Industrial production fell by 16.1 per cent for the first seven months of 2003, compared to the same period in 2002. Contractions in the food industry, as well as in the textile, shoemaking, building materials and construction industries, ranged from 20 to 50 per cent. The agro-industry subsector experienced a decline of 32 per cent, while several small and medium-sized enterprises remain closed or have reduced their activities, and many employees have been laid off. Retail trade witnessed a 10 to 40 per cent reduction in the first nine months of 2003. As a result of the disruptions caused in the transport sector by the de facto partitioning of the country and the persisting negative impact of the crisis on the tourism industry, the tertiary sector is following the same downward trend, with the exception of telecommunications, particularly the cellular telephone subsector.

44. The economic decline has affected the Government's capacity to generate revenues, which were estimated at 986.6 billion CFA francs for the first nine months of 2003. Despite declining revenues, the Government has increased its current expenditure, which reached CFAF 1,115.9 billion due to, among other things, defence expenditures and humanitarian and emergency operations. The budget deficit is estimated at CFAF 129.3 billion. According to a report issued in October 2003 by the West African Economic Monetary Union (WAEMU), inflation has reached 4.1 per cent over the past 12 months in Côte d'Ivoire, against an average of 1.2 per cent for the whole region.

45. The economic situation in the areas controlled by the Forces nouvelles is dire. The formal economy has collapsed, and livelihoods have disappeared with businesses and banks closed, the civil service administration almost non-existent and social services practically at a standstill, while thousands have lost their jobs and means of livelihood. Nationwide, the social situation is worrisome. Some 44 per cent of the population is now estimated to live below the poverty line, compared with 38 per cent before the September 2002 crisis.

46. The deteriorating economic situation in Côte d'Ivoire has a serious impact on the subregion as a whole where, prior to the conflict, the country contributed 40 per cent of the GDP of the WAEMU countries and 15 per cent of the GDP of the ECOWAS States. The neighbouring countries of Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and the Niger are, in particular, experiencing substantial spillover effects from the Ivorian crisis. Of those countries, Burkina Faso is the hardest hit. The crisis itself and the closure of the border with Burkina Faso have had a serious impact on the latter's economy, given its structural links with Côte d'Ivoire. More than 80 per cent of the external trade of Burkina Faso within WAEMU is with or through Côte d'Ivoire. Mali and the Niger are experiencing similar effects, but to a lesser degree. In addition, thousands of citizens from neighbouring countries who were working in Côte d'Ivoire have been forced to return to their home countries, aggravating the unemployment situation.

47. At the same time, a group of countries with port facilities and a more stable governance environment are benefiting in the short run from the Ivorian crisis. In Senegal, the tourism sector has registered a sudden boost. It increased by 8.6 per cent compared with an average increase of 4.1 per cent during the past two years. In Benin, Ghana, Guinea and Togo port activities have significantly increased.

III. Current international support for the peace process

48. The main responsibility for peacekeeping in Côte d'Ivoire currently rests with the Licorne and ECOMICI forces. It may be recalled that the Licorne forces were deployed along the ceasefire line, based on bilateral arrangements, following the signing of the ceasefire agreement of 17 October 2002. The deployment of ECOMICI forces began in January 2003, after a decision taken by the ECOWAS summit held in Accra in September 2002. Their deployment was delayed due to difficulties in securing logistical and financial support from donor countries. The deployment of the two forces was endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 1464 (2003) of 4 February 2003. Those forces continue to play an indispensable role in the supervision of the ceasefire and in preventing the resumption of conflict. Their presence has helped to maintain a security environment that should make it possible for the parties to pursue dialogue and to implement the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement.

A. ECOWAS Mission in Côte d'Ivoire

49. The ECOMICI force, whose total troop strength currently stands at 1,478, was reinforced in early December by 100 gendarmes (bringing their total to 150). The gendarmes are tasked with providing security for members of the Government of National Reconciliation in order to address the security concerns of the Forces

nouvelles. The forces, comprising contingents from Benin (312), Ghana (300), the Niger (309), Senegal (255) and Togo (302), secure areas of responsibility along the ceasefire line, which, with the ongoing withdrawal of heavy weapons and the lifting of checkpoints, is expanding into a "zone of confidence" running from the eastern to the western part of the country, as shown in the attached map. The contingents, which are deployed at Bangolo, Bondoukou, Daloa, Tiebissou, Zuénoula and Priko, apart from monitoring compliance with the ceasefire, assist in building confidence between the Forces nouvelles and FANCI and in facilitating the free movement of the population, as well as the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

50. However, the ECOMICI force continues to face serious troop and logistical shortfalls, which constrain its operational capacity. In this regard, it may be recalled that ECOWAS had determined that the force needed a troop strength of approximately 3,200 in order to effectively perform its mandate in conjunction with the current deployment of Licorne. Nevertheless, owing to the severe lack of financial resources, the force has not been able to achieve that troop level. Furthermore, the troops that were deployed in January 2003 have not been rotated for almost a year. These were some of the reasons that prompted ECOWAS to propose the transformation of ECOMICI into a reinforced United Nations peacekeeping force, as indicated in paragraph 2 above.

51. Given the situation facing the ECOMICI force, all Ivorian parties called for the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force that would include the ECOWAS forces. The current Chairman of ECOWAS, President Kufuor of Ghana, stressed to the assessment mission that the resources of ECOWAS were overstretched and that ECOMICI could no longer be sustained. All parties expressed the view that the proposed United Nations peacekeeping operation should be multidimensional, with significant military, police and civilian components, including a strong involvement in the electoral process. They also emphasized the unique legitimacy, impartiality and capabilities that the United Nations could bring to bear on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire. In that context, several interlocutors also expressed the view that, as the Ivorian peace process entered a delicate stage where complex issues, such as land reform and the status of foreign nationals, who were mainly from ECOWAS countries, were being dealt with, a United Nations peacekeeping operation would be perceived by the parties as a more impartial presence to provide the necessary support for the process.

B. Licorne forces

52. The current strength of the Licorne force is some 4,000 troops. They are deployed in Abidjan and at three regional headquarters, namely, Bouaké, Duékoué and Daloa. The force oversees compliance with the ceasefire in the zone of confidence in the west and backstops the ECOMICI troops that are monitoring the zone in eastern and central parts of the country. As in the case of ECOMICI, the mandate of the Licorne force includes monitoring compliance with the ceasefire, maintaining security in the zone of confidence and facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance. In addition, gendarmes from the Licorne operation support the ECOMICI gendarmes in providing security for the members of the Government of National Reconciliation.

53. Senior French government officials who met with the assessment mission in Paris confirmed that France intended to maintain the Licorne force in Côte d'Ivoire at its current level until the 2005 national elections. However, France has indicated that there are certain tasks that the Licorne troops would not be in a position to perform, in particular assisting in the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, providing security for the elections and deploying civilian police personnel to support the restoration of a police presence in the northern part of the country and the restructuring of the National Police.

C. United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire

54. Under its resolution 1479 (2003) of 13 May 2003, the Security Council decided that MINUCI would include a military liaison group comprising a total of 76 military liaison officers, whose role would complement the operations of the Licorne and ECOMICI forces. By the same resolution, the Council authorized the immediate deployment of 26 military liaison officers, with the remaining 50 to be deployed as needed, security conditions permitting. The specific tasks of the military liaison officers, as defined in the resolution, include providing advice to my Special Representative, monitoring the security situation, including the security of Liberian refugees, establishing liaison with FANCI and the Forces nouvelles, working in cooperation with the Licorne and ECOWAS forces to build confidence between the armed groups and providing input to planning on the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

55. The current strength of the military liaison group stands at 71 military liaison officers, who are deployed at the MINUCI headquarters and three sites in Abidjan (the Licorne, ECOMICI and FANCI headquarters), as well as in Boudoukou in the east, Duékoué and Daloa in the west and Yamoussoukro and Bouaké in central Côte d'Ivoire. The process of deploying the remaining officers is ongoing.

56. The Ivorian parties and the public at large have very high expectations concerning the role of the MINUCI military liaison group, in particular with respect to assisting ECOMICI and Licorne forces in verifying compliance with the ceasefire and the conditions governing the zone of confidence, as well as in supporting the preparations for and implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. In particular, it is expected that the military liaison officers would perform certain key tasks, such as verifying the quartering of heavy weapons, monitoring the movement of the armed groups to the cantonment sites and assisting in the registration of collected weapons, as well as the destruction of those that are not serviceable. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration plan being developed by the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, with the support of UNDP and the World Bank, foresees the deployment of MINUCI personnel at each of the disarmament and demobilization centres to be established throughout the country. With its present limited size and mandate, it is clear that MINUCI would not have the capacity to perform those important tasks, even at its full authorized strength of 76 military liaison officers.

57. The size and functions of the civilian component of the Mission are equally limited. In its resolution 1479 (2003), the Security Council approved the establishment of a small civilian staff to support my Special Representative on political, legal, civilian police, election, media, public relations and human rights

issues. The political unit of the Mission consists of four officers. The human rights unit comprises five officers, including a child protection officer, while the electoral, civilian police, legal and information and media relations units are staffed by one adviser each. One human rights officer is deployed in Duékoué in western Côte d'Ivoire, while the rest of the substantive civilian personnel are based at MINUCI headquarters in Abidjan. Consequently, the Mission barely manages to provide independent reporting of developments in the interior of the country, for which it relies essentially on the military liaison officers.

58. In addition to his personal efforts and his regular duties as head of MINUCI, my Special Representative chairs the Monitoring Committee, which comprises representatives of the African Union, ECOWAS, the European Union, the European Commission, the International Organization of la Francophonie and a representative of the Group of Eight countries, as well as France, the Bretton Woods institutions and military representatives from ECOMICI and Licorne. Under the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, the Committee was entrusted with monitoring the implementation of the provisions of the Agreement and was empowered to bring to the attention of the Security Council any obstructions or failures to implement it. However, many stakeholders informed the assessment mission that the nature of its composition and its working methods have inhibited the effectiveness of the Monitoring Committee. They strongly advised that consideration be given to streamlining the composition and working procedures of the Committee.

D. Economic Community of West African States and other partners

59. ECOWAS has provided leadership among the international partners in facilitating the Ivorian peace process. The Chairman of ECOWAS, as well as other subregional leaders and the Organization's Executive Secretary, have intervened at every stage in efforts to keep the peace process on track. In this connection, it may be recalled that the ceasefire agreement of 17 October 2002 was negotiated under the auspices of ECOWAS, as was the Accra II agreement of 8 March 2003 (see S/2003/374, para. 28), which sets out the procedures for resolving the impasse over the appointment of the Ministers for Defence and Internal Security. At the time of the visit of the assessment mission, ECOWAS was actively seized of the efforts to convince the Forces nouvelles to return to the Government and to encourage President Gbagbo to facilitate the adoption of the package of reforms envisaged in the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. Apart from ECOWAS, the African Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie are also engaged in the ongoing efforts to keep the peace process on track.

IV. Possible reinforcement of the United Nations presence

60. It should be recalled that, in my report of 26 March 2003 (S/2003/374 and Corr.1), I recommended the deployment of a small military liaison group that would complement the operations of the ECOMICI and Licorne forces in Côte d'Ivoire because, at that time, the Government of National Reconciliation was only beginning to take shape and the prospects for implementing the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement were still unclear. At the same time, I stated that once the Government was fully established and functioning and had developed its work programme, it

would be possible to determine additional steps needed to support the implementation of the Agreement. Furthermore, I stressed that the deployment of a substantial United Nations peacekeeping operation in Côte d'Ivoire would have to be considered in the event of a major change on the ground or in the commitment of the Licorne or ECOMICI forces. The assessment mission, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1514 (2003), looked into several proposals for the possible reinforcement of the United Nations role, taking into account the new realities on the ground, in particular the predicament of ECOMICI and the fresh momentum in the peace process. Those proposals are described below.

A. Military component

61. As indicated earlier, the ECOMICI and Licorne forces have performed their mandate admirably, under extremely difficult conditions. However, ECOMICI is seriously overstretched, and the ECOWAS leadership has made it clear that ECOWAS is no longer in a position to sustain the force in Côte d'Ivoire. Regrettably, the efforts to mobilize logistical and financial support for the force from donor countries over the past 11 months have not yielded the required level of resources. The assessment mission therefore concluded that it was essential to give serious consideration to the ECOWAS proposal to deploy a United Nations peacekeeping force in Côte d'Ivoire and to reassign the ECOMICI contingents to that force.

62. The most immediate priority of the proposed United Nations peacekeeping operation would be to take over and reinforce the role being performed by ECOMICI in the zone of confidence. Specific tasks of the peacekeeping force would include maintaining stability in its areas of deployment along the ceasefire line, monitoring the zone of confidence and deterring and reporting on violations of the ceasefire, responding to incidents, particularly in the zone of confidence, facilitating freedom of movement of United Nations personnel and humanitarian agencies, protecting the civilian population in its areas of deployment and, within its capabilities, monitoring the border between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, including ensuring the security of Liberian refugees in the border areas and liaison with UNMIL.

63. In addition, the peacekeeping force would support the Government of National Reconciliation in implementing the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. To this end, it is expected that the force would provide security at the cantonment sites and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration sites, collect and secure weapons and destroy the unserviceable weapons and unstable ammunition, and monitor the disarmament process and the quartering of heavy weapons. In the longer term, the peacekeeping force would also provide security and support for the 2005 national elections.

64. The assessment mission examined a number of options regarding the size, composition and areas of deployment of the proposed force. However, on the basis of the reality on the ground, the mission decided to narrow the options down to two. In particular, three critical factors determined the two options, namely, the nature of the tasks to be performed by the force, as outlined above, the geographic deployment of the force, which would not cover the entire territory of Côte d'Ivoire, and the arrangements for sharing responsibilities, as well as the relationship that the

force would have with the Licorne forces. The assessment mission concluded that, in order to make the best use of all available capabilities on the ground, practical arrangements for sharing responsibilities with the Licorne force would make it possible to limit the strength of a United Nations force to some 6,240 personnel, including 200 military observers and 120 staff officers.

65. Under this option, the Licorne forces would have to guarantee the availability of a quick-reaction force whenever it was requested by the Force Commander of the United Nations peacekeeping operation. Needless to say, the viability of this option would depend entirely on the implementation of effective measures and clear procedures for command and control. In particular, once a quick-reaction force is deployed in an area of responsibility of the United Nations force, it should be placed under the tactical command of a United Nations military officer. In addition, effective mechanisms for liaison between the two forces must be established at the force headquarters level from the outset.

66. Without such arrangements for sharing responsibilities with Licorne, the United Nations would require additional units, including a quick-reaction force, attack helicopters and other enabling units. Under this option, the size of the proposed United Nations peacekeeping force would need to be increased to approximately 8,900 troops. Under both options, the current ECOMICI contingents would become part of the United Nations force. However, they would have to meet the United Nations requirements for equipment and sustainability. It is therefore essential to ensure that the bilateral support they are currently receiving from donor countries continues, at least until appropriate alternative arrangements can be put into place.

67. Consultations have been held on a contingency basis with the relevant French authorities. The consultations have led to an understanding on the arrangements for sharing responsibilities between Licorne and the proposed United Nations force, as outlined above. Therefore, should the Security Council decide to establish such a force, its total authorized strength would need to be 6,240, as indicated in the first option. At the same time, the troop level would be reviewed on a regular basis as the situation on the ground evolved and, in particular, in the light of the progress achieved in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

68. The proposed United Nations force would be deployed in two brigade sectors. The force headquarters and sector headquarters would be based in Abidjan, Bouaké and Daloa respectively. Battalion deployments in the western sector would be centred on Danané/Guiglo, Man/Duékoué, Daloa/Séguéla and a smaller contingent of 300 in Tabou/San-Pédro. In the eastern sector battalions would be centred on Bouaké/Yamoussoukro and Daoukro/Dabakala, and a reduced battalion of 500 in the Bondoukou/Bouna area. Subsequent deployment to support the later phases of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in the Odienné and Korhogo areas would be undertaken by troops redeployed once tasks had been completed in the zone of confidence. There would be no requirement for a force reserve battalion since the Licorne quick-reaction forces would be based in Yamoussoukro and Korhogo. Similarly, there would be no requirement for the United Nations force to deploy attack helicopters.

69. It is envisaged that the reinforcement of the reassigned ECOMICI contingents would take place in four phases. In the first, it is anticipated that there would be a period in which the status quo was maintained with ECOMICI elements being

prepared for deployment; this phase would last approximately 60 days from the date of commencement of the mandate. The second phase would see the assumption of responsibility by the force headquarters and the deployment of additional forces to the full mission strength. Subject to the timely availability of well-trained and prepared troops, this could also be completed within 60 days. The third phase would follow, ending on a date following the elections that would allow time for the results to be tabulated and for the new Government to be installed. The final phase would cover the post-election period.

70. The 76 military liaison officers under MINUCI would become part of the proposed 200-member military observer group whose tasks would include monitoring the cantonment of heavy weapons and disarmament, monitoring the borders and cross-border liaison with UNMIL, carrying out confidence-building activities and supporting the messages of the public information campaign. As such military observers would be deployed to the 17 cantonment sites, key areas of interest to the Government and the Forces nouvelles and designated border areas.

B. Civilian police and judicial component

71. The Linas-Marcoussis Agreement requests the international community to support and advise the Government of National Reconciliation in restructuring the security forces of Côte d'Ivoire. The responsibility for internal security in Côte d'Ivoire lies with the National Police and the Gendarmerie. The National Police are under the authority of the Ministry of Internal Security, and its estimated strength is approximately 12,000 officers. The Gendarmerie's strength is about 8,522 officers, who are under the authority of the Ministry of Defence. While the infrastructure and operations of the two forces have remained intact in the Government-controlled south, the civil war has completely disrupted them in the north, where the task of maintaining law and order has fallen to the Forces nouvelles.

72. The main role of the civilian police and judicial component of the proposed peacekeeping operation would therefore focus on supporting and providing advice to the Government of National Reconciliation on the restoration of a police presence and the re-establishment of the judiciary in the areas held by the Forces nouvelles, as well as in the zone of confidence. The United Nations civilian police and judicial advisers would play a key role in instilling confidence in the population so as to facilitate the restoration of a police presence and to strengthen the judiciary in northern Côte d'Ivoire.

73. In the Government-controlled south, where police and judiciary operations have continued, the role of the United Nations civilian police and judicial advisers would focus on providing advice and observing the operations of the law enforcement authorities with a view to deterring the widely reported excesses and abuses and strengthening professionalism within the National Police and the Gendarmerie. The United Nations Civilian Police Unit would advise the Government on the restructuring of the Gendarmerie and the National Police.

74. As indicated earlier, ECOWAS countries have deployed 150 gendarmes as part of ECOMICI in order to provide security protection for members of the Government. Should the Security Council approve the transformation of ECOMICI troops into United Nations peacekeepers, it would be essential to also reassign the ECOMICI Gendarmerie as a United Nations unit, which would continue to perform

the indispensable task of assisting in providing protection to members of the Government. In this connection, it is expected that the Gendarmerie from the Licorne forces would continue to extend the same level of support to the proposed United Nations unit as they are currently providing to the ECOMICI Gendarmerie.

75. Considering the sensitive security situation in Abidjan, where militant groups frequently stage violent demonstrations against international personnel, including peacekeepers, it would also be necessary to deploy formed police units with crowd-control capability. Such units would be devoted primarily to assisting in the protection of the headquarters of the United Nations peacekeeping operation, as well as other United Nations facilities in the capital.

76. Given the limited time available to the assessment mission, it was not possible to collect adequate data needed to determine the size and composition of the proposed civilian police and judicial component. I therefore intend to send a small technical team back to Côte d'Ivoire in early January to collect more detailed information, which will enable me to submit recommendations as a supplement to the present report before the mandate of MINUCI expires on 4 February. In the meantime, it is my intention, subject to the approval of the Security Council, to immediately deploy to Abidjan a small civilian police team of up to five officers to enable the Mission to begin preparatory work for supporting the Government in this important area.

C. Electoral component

77. I also intend to send an electoral needs-assessment mission to Côte d'Ivoire in the first half of January to conduct a comprehensive assessment and to collect information to enable me to prepare recommendations on the scope and resource requirements of a possible United Nations involvement in the October 2005 general elections. In the meantime, pending the submission of further recommendations and as recommended by many of the assessment mission's interlocutors, I intend to establish a small electoral team within MINUCI to give the Mission the capacity necessary to provide initial technical advice to the electoral authorities as well as to monitor developments and enhance liaison with other concerned parties in Côte d'Ivoire.

D. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration component

78. The Linas-Marcoussis Agreement provides for international supervision of the regrouping and cantonment of the armed groups, as well as the disarmament and demobilization process. In this connection, the Agreement stipulates that all recruits enlisted after the events of 19 September 2002 will be demobilized and that the Government will implement a reintegration programme for military personnel with the support of the international community. It will therefore be essential to establish a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration component comprising military and civilian personnel in the proposed United Nations peacekeeping operation to support the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. Given the significant presence of foreign armed elements who have been involved in the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire, the component should take into account the need for a regional approach regarding disarmament, demobilization and

reintegration activities, in cooperation with other relevant actors. While the military personnel would come from the proposed force and military observers, there would be a need to add a few civilian experts in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Since the preparations for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration are already at an advanced stage, it would be essential to deploy those experts expeditiously.

E. Human rights component

79. In view of the continuing crisis of protection, as well as ongoing violations of human rights and the climate of impunity within Côte d'Ivoire, it is necessary to reinforce the current human rights unit in MINUCI to enable the Mission to perform the following tasks: monitoring and verification of and reporting on the human rights situation in various parts of the country; advocacy and interventions with local and national authorities to protect civilians and vulnerable groups; technical cooperation and capacity-building; provision of training for peacekeepers and law enforcement officials; provision of support for the establishment of the National Commission on Human Rights as well as appropriate transitional justice mechanisms; provision of support for strengthening the judicial system and restoring the rule of law; documentation of the extent of violence against women during the crisis and provision of recommendations concerning possible justice mechanisms; playing an advisory role to the United Nations country team and the Inter-agency Humanitarian Coordination Committee; and provision of advice on the timing of the establishment of an international commission of inquiry into serious human rights violations committed since September 2002, as envisaged under the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. It is therefore recommended that, in addition to the field office at Duékoué, subregional offices be established in Bouaké, Korhogo, Man, San-Pédro, Yamoussoukro and Bondoukou or Daloa. As the proposed peacekeepers deploy, the sub-offices would be co-located with them.

F. Public information component

80. Should the Security Council decide to establish a multidimensional peacekeeping operation, a strong public information component would be essential. Ivorians throughout the country should have access to authoritative information on the peace process from an objective, unbiased source, including with regard to the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and, eventually, the steps leading up to elections. The component should have the capacity for public outreach and media relations, as well as for print, radio and video production. Sufficient resources should also be provided to enable the component to work closely with local media outlets to publicize the goals of the Mission. Public information branch offices would be co-located with the military deployment in at least two locations outside Abidjan.

81. It would also be essential for the peacekeeping operation to set up its own independent radio broadcasting capability. Such a capability would provide the most efficient and effective means of covering the entire country, guarantee access to the airwaves, preserve the integrity of United Nations programming and ensure that non-partisan information is available to all Ivorians. Special attention would be paid

to producing programming in the local languages. In addition, a strengthened public information component would continue and intensify efforts to work with national media to improve conditions and encourage responsible reporting and would work with the national media regulatory structures, in close cooperation with civil society and United Nations agencies, to further develop and strengthen them.

G. Political and civil affairs component

82. In order to support the political efforts of my Special Representative, the proposed peacekeeping operation would have an enhanced political and civil affairs component comprising up to 12 officers. Some of the officers would be deployed to regional offices in Yamoussoukro, Bouaké, Man, Korhogo and San-Pédro. The political and civil affairs component would be responsible for monitoring, integrating, interpreting and reporting developments in the political, administrative, social, humanitarian and military spheres throughout the country. The component would also monitor developments at the subregional and international levels and evaluate the implications and impact of such developments on the implementation of the Linas-Marcousssis Agreement. In addition, it would provide substantive servicing to the Monitoring Committee. The daily work of the component would also entail close liaison with national social and political institutions and organs, major actors, including key protagonists in the conflict and stakeholders in civil society, the military and the economy nationwide, and key political actors in the immediate subregion and internationally.

83. The proposed peacekeeping operation would also include gender advisers, who would provide advice on gender mainstreaming, not only within the operations of the Mission, but also with regard to the implementation of the Ivorian peace process.

V. Observations and recommendations

84. The prolonged political stalemate in Côte d'Ivoire could have taken a turn for the worse with the recent attempt by the Young Patriots and elements of FANCI to cross the ceasefire line and launch attacks on the Forces nouvelles. The decisive action taken by the Licorne force to resolve that regrettable incident demonstrated the indispensable role being performed by both the Licorne and ECOMICI forces in preventing Côte d'Ivoire from sliding back into conflict. It is clear that there are hard-line elements among the Ivorian parties who are determined to undermine the peace process and who are tempted to seek a military solution to the crisis. They should not be allowed to succeed and, to that end, it is essential that the international community provide support to the efforts of those who are working to promote the effective implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement.

85. It was in that context that I instructed the assessment mission to convey to the Ivorian parties the clear message that if they wished to receive the full support of the international community, including the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force and the reinforced United Nations presence they have unanimously called for, they would have to take the country out of the political impasse that has plagued it over the past three months, engage in a viable peace process and demonstrate their commitment to implement the provisions of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement fully and in good faith. It is therefore encouraging to

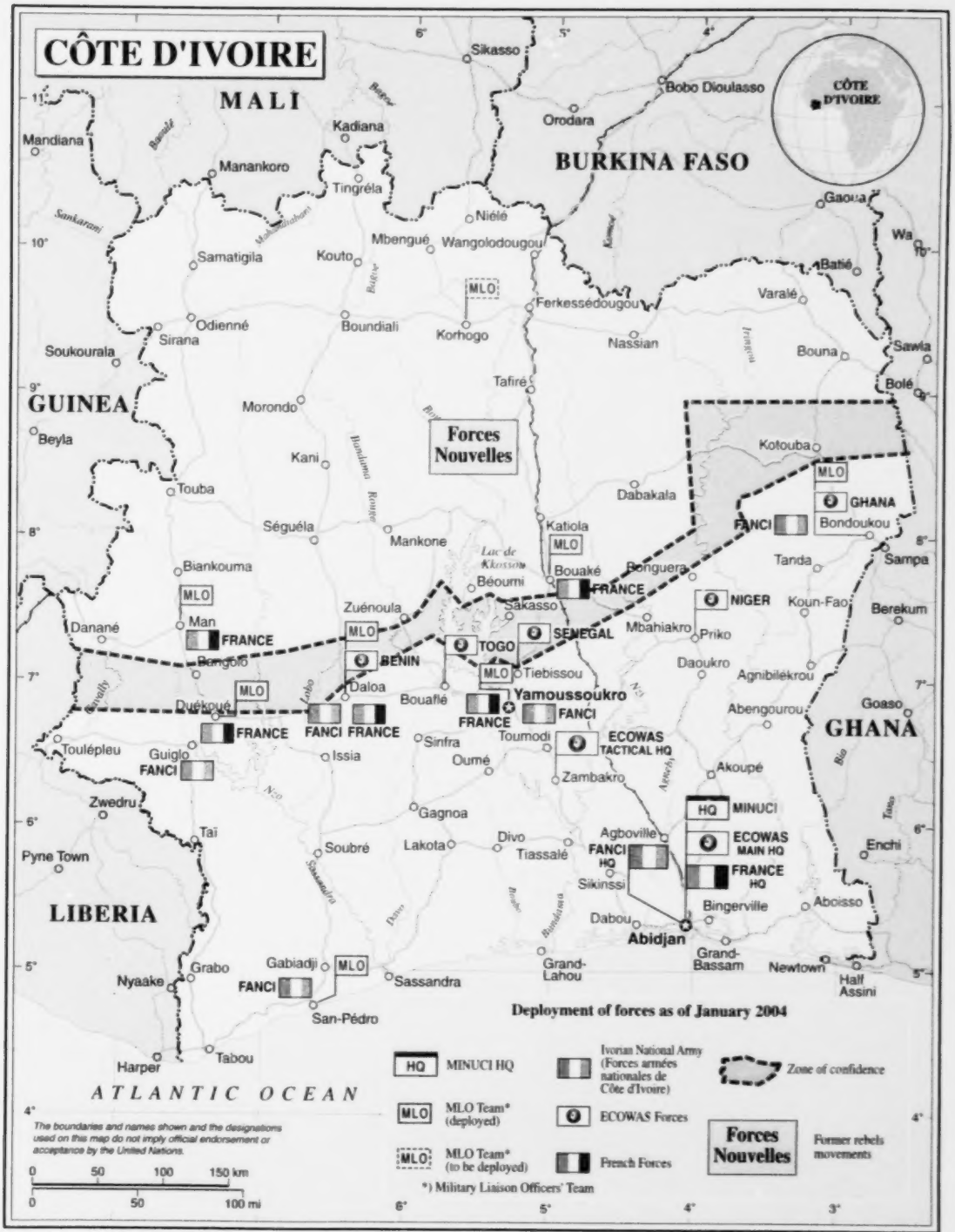
note that President Gbagbo and Prime Minister Diarra have taken commendable initiatives in meeting with the Forces nouvelles in Yamoussoukro and Bouaké to discuss ways of keeping the peace process on track. The steps taken so far by the Forces nouvelles and FANCI to implement the decisions of the Yamoussoukro and Bouaké meetings, as well as the recent return of the Forces nouvelles to the Government, are beginning to give the peace process fresh impetus.

86. However, there should be no illusions. These are but initial steps in the right direction. The Ivorian parties and their leaders must now proceed to address some fundamental issues in order to ensure that the peace process becomes irreversible. To that end, the parties must take the following steps: the Forces nouvelles need to reaffirm their commitment to remain part of the Government of National Reconciliation until the Government completes its programme of work and elections are held in 2005; FANCI and the Forces nouvelles must complete their implementation of the decisions taken at the recent meetings in Yamoussoukro and Bouaké; the Ivorian parties concerned must take steps to disband the militias and curb the disruptive activities of the various youth groups; and the Government must complete its consideration of the package of reforms envisaged in the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, in particular those relating to article 35 of the Constitution, nationality, land tenure, electoral matters and the media and human rights.

87. In this connection, I would like to recommend that, should the Ivorian parties make sufficient progress in carrying out these important steps by 4 February 2004 (the date on which the mandates of MINUCI, ECOMICI and Licorne expire), the Security Council consider authorizing the deployment of a multidimensional United Nations peacekeeping operation to support the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire. The peacekeeping operation would comprise a military component with a troop strength of 6,240, including 200 military observers and 120 staff officers, and a civilian component consisting of enhanced electoral, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, human rights, public information, civil affairs, political, civilian police and judicial components, as proposed in section IV above.

88. On the basis of lessons learned in establishing other peacekeeping operations and considering the needs of recently established as well as anticipated operations, I must stress that the issue of resources is critical. The Secretariat has recently encountered challenges in securing in a timely manner adequately equipped military contingents and police personnel for United Nations peacekeeping operations, as well as the enabling capacities and force multipliers that allow such military and police deployments to be fully effective. The proposed operation poses particular challenges with regard to force generation, obtaining the required police personnel and the depleted strategic deployment stocks, especially because it comes at a time when recently established operations, as well as anticipated ones, are competing for limited resources. In this connection, I am concerned that Member States may not come forward in a timely manner with all the resources required for the operation. Should the Security Council approve the above recommendation, it would be essential for the Council and troop-contributing countries to ensure that the requisite resources were made available, but not at the expense of other missions, which also require a major and sustained effort. In addition, it would not be prudent to expect the reassignment of ECOMICI contingents to begin sooner than three to four months from now.

89. In conclusion, I would like to pay tribute to my Special Representative, Albert Tévoédjrè, as well as the civilian and military personnel of MINUCI and the United Nations country team, for the contribution they are making to the efforts to restore lasting peace in Côte d'Ivoire. I also wish to commend the ECOMICI and Licorne forces for their indispensable role in stabilizing the country, as well as the humanitarian community for the critical work they are performing and the ECOWAS leaders, who have played a key role in keeping the peace process on track.



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